An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

Sven Mehzoud, Monash University, Australia
Jane Lawrence, University of South Australia, Australia
Stuart Foster, Massey University, New Zealand
Marina Lommerse, Curtin University, Australia

Abstract

Research 'through' design is a becoming' field, which presents a challenge to designer/researchers. Recently, national research authorities have broadened their parameters to validate creative work in art, architecture and design. This study and the resulting model test the perceived ambiguity of the requirements provided by Australia's Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) for creative works to be recognised as research through exhibition, and proposes a peer-reviewed model for interior design/interior architecture that can provide appropriate quality assurance processes for creative works.

Designers and academics may be involved in a range of roles in developing an exhibition: as practitioners exhibiting work; as curators selecting works; as catalogue essay writers; as designers planning and designing the exhibition. These roles fall under the umbrella of creative practice and can be considered research activity under the ERA/PBRF — assuming that research can be quality assured. To enable the critical engagement of research-based creative endeavours, the Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association (IDEA) put forward an exhibition of creative works. A working party, established in 2011 to explore the potential of exhibition as research, used the 2012 IDEA exhibition An Interior Affair: a State of Becoming as a pilot [for this study]. The aim is to set benchmarks in an area which has been contested and tenuous in terms of evaluation.

The paper reviews previous research into exhibition as research, and compares and contrasts four national research frameworks (Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, South Africa) that recognise creative works as research, and exhibition as a validation and dissemination vehicle. We explore the range of quality assurance processes applicable for creative work as research in interior design/interior architecture, bearing in mind 'what an exhibition's essential contribution to knowledge might be, and how that contribution is to be archived and disseminated' (Niedderer et al. (2006, 1). We examine a research-based gallery model to elucidate how these various quality assurance guidelines were interpreted in reality, and propose a model for peer review of research through design. We conclude with a review of the pilot model, which merges aspects of recognised curatorial and peer review approaches used in academic journals and conferences. We survey the existing constraints and the efficacy of our exhibition design as event.

The pilot model validates the multitudinous interior design/interior architectural creative works evidencing a variety of research endeavors. As the publication of this paper precedes the actual exhibition, we expect that further research on the model will include an evaluation of the research in action at the event.

1

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s, governments globally began to recognise creative works as research. For example, in Australia, Paul Keating, an advocate of an Australian cultural identity, launched an arts industry program entitled 'Creative Nation' in 1994. The global movement raised questions about how creative work can be understood as research, and led to three decades of trial and error, during which there was debate and testing of various formats for postgraduate work, establishment of appropriate dissemination/publication modes, and critical review. In 1998 the Strand Report 'argued that publication takes the form of exhibitions for practitioners in the visual arts and crafts.'[1] The exhibition of creative works has now been recognised by Australia's national Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and New Zealand's national Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) as a vehicle to publicly disseminate creative works and to validate or provide quality assurance of these works as research.[2]

---

[1] Dennis Strand 'Research in Art and Design' cited in Katherine Moline and Karina Clarke, 'Exhibitions as interfaces between practice and research', (ACUADS, 2007), 2, http://karinaclarkedesign.com.au/downloads/acuad-Moline-Clarke-2007.pdf. The Strand Report 1998 summarised the various forms of creative research unable to be reported due the science–based research categories. The report argued for equivalent outcomes and research performance measurement for the creative disciplines. The limitation of measurable research outcomes had 'effectively confined research publication to the written word, ignoring all other forms [and] placing the creative arts in a highly invidious position.'

[2] Australian Research Council, *Draft ERA 2012 Submission Guidelines*, (Canberra: Australia, 2011), 11, www.arc.gov.au/pdf/era12/ERA2012_SubmissionGuidelines.pdf. The recognition of original creative works as research resulted from many years of advocacy by academics through peak bodies in the design and visual art disciplines, including the Interior Design Educators Association (IDEA), Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS), Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia (AASA) and Australian Deans of the Built Environment and Design (ADBED) who argued that research-based creative practices led to the formation of new knowledge, concepts, methodologies and understandings.

2

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

The introduction of new research categories for the creative disciplines has allowed interior design academics to be acknowledged by their universities for their creative, practice-based research by accumulating 'research points' just as their colleagues in other disciplines have since 1992. Exhibition and exhibition curation have been by far the areas of highest activity for interior design academics.[3]

Exhibition models have been tested for architecture and visual arts; however, the authors argue that these models do not adequately present the potential and nature of interior design/interior architecture. Therefore, this paper investigates how an appropriate model for interior design/interior architecture can be conceptualised and constructed.

Christopher Frayling distinguishes three modes of design research practice: 'research *for*, research *about*, research *through* practice.'[4] We focus on the latter, where 'research through [practice] regards its processes as constituting the research methodology itself, or at least the greater part thereof.'[5]

For designers who engage in research practice, the framing of research *through* design has been a challenge. Therefore the Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association (IDEA) seeks to examine the idea of exhibition as research, in order to support and encourage colleagues in their creative work and to enable venues and vehicles for the critical engagement of their work. A working party, established in 2011 to explore the potential of exhibition as research, piloted a model for the exhibition that will be adjunct to the 2012 IDEA Symposium. The aim is to set

---

[3] Joanne Cys, 'Exhibition as research/research as exhibition', Proceedings of Interiors World Forum Conference 2008: *Places and themes of Interiors, Contemporary Research Worldwide*, (Italy: Politecnico Di Milano, Italy, 1-3 October, pp.1-8).

[4] Christopher Frayling, cited in Moline & Clark. (2007), 1, 2.

[5] Christopher Frayling, cited in Moline & Clark. (2007), 1, 2.

3

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

benchmarks in an area which needs to debate and define the key processes of understanding and evaluating research through practice.

This paper first investigates four national research frameworks (Australia, New Zealand, UK, South Africa) that recognise creative works as research, and exhibition as a publication and dissemination vehicle. We then explore current understandings of 'exhibition as research'. A case study illuminates how a research gallery can provide a structure to frame, evaluate and disseminate creative work as research. Then we discuss the pilot model used for the IDEA 2012 Exhibition and how the process of evaluation was undertaken, to make clear how national research guidelines were interpreted in reality.

National frameworks that recognise creative works as research

We reviewed the national research frameworks from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Africa. This section provides a summary of that review. It specifically identifies the definitions of creative works as research used in these frameworks as well as the criteria used to assess the quality and impact of this particular research output type. The section concludes with a set of criteria that could be applied to a research model of creative works as an exhibition.

In general, the policies set up for identifying and assessing the quality of research in the tertiary sector in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have stemmed from government budget constraints in the 1980s and 1990s. This led to initial government policies and papers on the accountability of higher education/tertiary education institutions as a way to justify the economic value of the activities that the funded institutions were undertaking. A report on Higher Education in Europe also identified that significant changes to how funding is administered have occurred since

4

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

1995 in almost all of the European countries.[6] This political and increasingly competitive context, as well as a focus on outcome targets, spawned new policy instruments, such as research quality frameworks that sought to identify what the value of the research activities was, and how they should be measured. Research quality administrations were set up in order to implement and manage the policies and frameworks.

The current Australian framework, *Excellence in Research for Australia* [ERA][7] differentiates between Traditional and Non-traditional Research Output Types. Traditional Output types include: 'Book - Authored Research; Book - Chapters in Research Book; Journal Articles - Refereed, Scholarly Journal; Conference Publications - Full Paper Refereed'.[8] Non-traditional Research Output Types include: 'Live performance of creative works; recorded, rendered creative works; curated or produced substantial public exhibitions and events.'[9] Non-traditional Research Output Types require a statement that has to address research background, research contribution and research significance. The research significance component is the most relevant in relation to the development of a creative works for exhibition model. It is the assessment process for the selection of Non-traditional Research Outputs, such as peer reviewing processes that indicate the quality of the work. However, the guidelines also point out that in the case of curatorial work, physically accessible exhibitions require the setting of a recognised gallery, museum or event.[10] ERA also makes a provision for creative works to be included in a submission that does not *a priori* constitute research. Non-Traditional Research Outputs are evaluated by Research Evaluation Committee members [REC] members and ERA peer-reviewers.

---

[6] Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, 'Progress in higher education reform across Europe: Funding Reform', Volume 1: Executive Summary main report, (2008) 124, ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/funding/vol1_en.pdf.

[7] Australian Research Council, *ERA 2012 Submission Guidelines*. Canberra, www.arc.gov.au/pdf/era12/ERA2012_SubmissionGuidelines.pdf

[8] ERA 2012 Submission Guidelines, 31.
[9] ERA 2012 Submission Guidelines, 31
[10] ERA 2012 Submission Guidelines, 48

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

The New Zealand framework, Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), was first introduced in 2003 and is administered by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). PBRG is based on the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) introduced in 1986, now replaced by Research Excellence Framework (REF). A broad range of research activities are accepted as research, with a focus on the quality of the research output. The quality of the output is defined by the formal quality-assurance processes of peer review or refereeing. It should be noted that 'any output which does not go through a formal quality assurance process by those expert in the field prior to public dissemination is a non-quality assured output in terms of PBRF. Reviews, on the whole, are evidence of peer esteem rather than quality assurance.'(i) Spatial/Interior design researchers are evaluated and ranked by the Creative and Performing Arts panel (CPA). The key concept for the Creative and Performing Arts Panel is 'publication', interpreted broadly as a process that gives public access to the creative work under consideration (ii).

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the current framework for assessing and funding research in the UK.[11] The purpose is to provide assessment outcomes for the allocation of funds, accountability for public investment and benchmarking information. The assessment process is based on expert review and consists of three distinct elements: output, impact and environment.[12] The REF publication defines research as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared',[13] and identifies the range of possible research outputs:

---

[11] REF 02.2011: Assessment framework and guidance on submissions, (July 2011) http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/research-excellence-framework/GuidanceonSubmissionsREF02-2011.pdf [retrieved 2 February 2012]. A summary of the key changes can be found on page 10 of this document.

[12] Output assesses the quality of the research outputs using international research quality standards; impact assesses the 'reach and significance' of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture; environment assesses the contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. REF 02.2011, 6.

[13] Output assesses the quality of the research outputs using international research quality standards; impact assesses the 'reach and significance' of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture; environment assesses the contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base. REF 02.2011, 6.

6

In addition to printed academic work, research outputs may include, but are not limited to: new materials, devices, images, artefacts, products and buildings; confidential or technical reports; intellectual property, whether in patents or other forms; performances, exhibits or events; work published in non-print media. An underpinning principle of the REF is that all forms of research output will be assessed on a fair and equal basis.[14]

The South African National Research Foundation (NRF) administers and facilitates the process of evaluating and rating individual researchers, with the evaluation period covering the previous eight years of research.[15] Interior design / interior architecture research falls under the assessment panel of Performing and Creative Arts, and Design, with recognised research outputs under the heading 'Formal academic research' including 'Editorships and curatorships (where editorial work or curation is taken to imply substantive research, explicitly bringing new knowledge or insights to the public domain).'[16]

Practice as a research outcome is a recognised research output as long as the work in each case is taken to imply substantive research, explicitly bringing new knowledge or insights to the public domain.[17] Also acknowledged are non-conventional academic activities related to creative work and performance: catalogues, programs, and other supporting documentation describing the results of arts research in combination with the works themselves.[18] Of particular interest in the South African framework is the process by which peers are selected to review portfolios: 'At least six reviewers (peers) evaluate the research outputs of each applicant. Normally half of them are

---

[14] REF 02.2011, 22

[15] NRF, Evaluation and Rating, Key Research areas and Guidelines, (February 2009). 3,
evaluation.nrf.ac.za/Content/Evaluation/Apply.htm.

[16] NRF, Evaluation and Rating, 30.

[17] NRF, Evaluation and Rating, 30.

[18] NRF, Evaluation and Rating, 30.

7

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

selected from a list of potential reviewers supplied by the applicant, while the rest are selected independently by the relevant Specialist Committee.'[19]

In conclusion, all frameworks make provision for creative works to be included as a form of research. There are three common aspects we consider relevant to the development of a model for creative works for exhibition. They are: meeting the definition of research; assurance of the work's quality, prior or post dissemination; and public dissemination. The UK research definition is succinctly put and appears to be valid for all frameworks. These frameworks also suggest that quality assurance, or the assessment of the significance of the work, can be achieved by a high profile 'curatorial board'. This may consist of peers with high standing in the relevant interior design/interior architecture or related fields. This establishes a quality assurance process (*a priori* in the terminology of the NZ PBRF framework) responding to the set of quality measures identified in the viewed policies and frameworks. However, these frameworks also provide opportunities to assess the quality of the work during the work's public exhibition. Another significant requirement is for the work to be in the public domain. This stresses the importance of providing evidence of the location of the work's publication, its accessibility and the extent of its dissemination. The frameworks do not explicitly prescribe specific types of locations such as galleries or other similar institutions, but rather extend the range to include events.

Defining exhibition as research

To situate the discussion of our model, this section begins with a review of ideas around exhibition as research and some of the challenges in defining it. Interior designers/interior architects and academics may be involved in a range of roles as part of developing an exhibition. They are: as practitioners exhibiting work; as curators selecting works; as catalogue essay writers; as designers planning and designing the exhibition. These roles fall under the umbrella of creative practice and

---

[19] NRF, Evaluation and Rating, tbc.

8

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

can be considered research activity under the ERA[20]/PBRF — assuming that research can be quality assured.

The Strand Report of 1998 summarised the various forms of creative research unable to be reported due to the limits imposed by science-based research categories. The report argued for equivalent outcomes and research performance measurement for the creative disciplines. The limitation of measurable research outcomes had 'effectively confined research publication to the written word, ignoring all other forms [and] placing the creative arts in a highly invidious position.'[21]

Lucy Lyons explored exhibition as publication and argues that when creative work as research is exhibited, it is often examined under the conventions of an 'art exhibition' rather than as research. Instead of evaluating whether the research communicates new knowledge, or the validity of the methods used, the work is assessed 'in terms of what it looked like, style, process, and aesthetics.'[22] This suggests a role for education of the audience, including the reviewers. Just as a reviewer of an academic article/book is expected to have knowledge of the subject and an ability to assess the research and creative value of the work, so should the creative reviewers be knowledgeable. Perhaps this can be extended through a subtle education of the public/viewers, for example through guided tours/videos/displayed information in appropriate formats. Moline and Clark also point out the difference in receiving and engaging with exhibited art works compared with that of design works. They note that perhaps research-based exhibitions should have their own dedicated space where the focus is on enquiry rather than contemplation and publication.[23]

---

[20] ERA 2012 Submission Guidelines, 44.

[21] Strand, cited in Joanne Cys, 2008, 1

[22] Lucy Lyons, 'Walls are not my friends: issues surrounding the dissemination of practice-led research within appropriate and relevant contexts', *Working Papers in Art and Design* (2006), 4, 5.

[23]Katherine Moline and Karina Clarke, 'Exhibitions as interfaces between practice and research' in Published Proceedings, ACUADS Conference, (2007), 10.

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

Moline and Clark recommend that 'more finely tuned measures are necessary to describe how exhibitions can function as the publication of practitioners' research.'[24] As this is an emerging way of publishing, there needs to be a proactive process of educating the public, including the experts in the field.

Niedderer et al. investigated the nature, role and purpose of the research exhibition. They state that exhibition within research has certain problems. For example 'it's not clear whether, and in which way, the research exhibition is different from an ordinary exhibition, what its essential contribution to knowledge might be, and how that contribution is to be archived and disseminated.'[25]

The 2007-08 exhibition *A Place at the Table: The Politics of Being Inside*, at the Kerry Packer Civic Gallery in Adelaide, is one example of a Research Exhibition. 'The exhibition aimed to test the significance of interiors in line with the ... re-consideration of interior design beyond the dominant historical structure of architectural enclosure.'[26] Joanne Cys notes 'A curator may conceive the theme of an exhibition, the selection of works, the arrangement of the exhibition of works, and write, commission and edit accompanying scholarly text and documentation.'[27] Cys goes on to say 'this also suggests that exhibition curation often undertaken by design and visual arts academics, is in itself a research activity'.[28] The following illustrates the difficulty in an exhibition of identifying where the research and design begins and ends, as these aspects merge in an organic and synergistic way. Concepts can be extracted, but they emerge from the synthesis of design and the enquiry it embodies. As such, questions, perhaps, more than conclusions emerge.

---

[24] Moline & Clarke. 2007, 2.
[25] Kristina Niedderer et al.,'The research exhibition: context, interpretation and knowledge creation' in Published Proceedings DRS Wonderground Conference (2006), 1.
[26] Cys, 2008, 3.
[27] Cys. 2008, 3.
[28] Cys. 2008, 5.

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

...the premise of the exhibition was based on the idea of the political and social meanings of public interiors and that the content was sourced from an architectural archive meant that the narrative, collection, organisation, communication and making of the exhibition were iterative stages of a process that was equally exhibition design practice and interior architecture research. Decisions about content influenced decisions about design and equally decisions about design influenced decisions about content. A book entitled *Table* documented the total production of the exhibition itself, evidence of the seamless connection between curation and production; research and design.[29]

Art and design funding AHRC in the UK, and research performance indexes in Australia and New Zealand, tie validation of research exhibition to specific measures of whether the output is demonstrably research. However, another UK agency, [RAE], considered all exhibitions as potentially valid research outcomes, and rankings of quality and status were based on post-event materials, catalogues and critical reviews, verified by a panel's expert understanding of the field.

The criteria show that the research status of exhibitions is not consistent:

that the community possess no commonly agreed criteria by which it might verify if knowledge presented in the exhibition format is cognate with research knowledge, or how it may be made explicit within the framework of such formats. Moreover, there are no broadly agreed methods of ensuring that, should knowledge be identified, it can be made available to inspection beyond the in-situ exhibition.[30]

Science-based research has clear guidelines, definitions and processes for communication and dissemination for research. However, equivalent formal definitions for what constitutes

---

[29] Cys. 2008, 4
[30] Niedderer et al. 2006, 4

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

IDEA
Interior Design/
Interior Architecture
Educators Association

Symposium 2012 *Interior: A State of Becoming*

Curtin University   September 2012

creative/professional practice are emerging and are not universally agreed on. This is also identified by Carter,[31] who argues that current research conventions do not know how to understand creative practice as research.[32] Perhaps this is because the discipline of interior design/interior architecture straddles two realms — science and creativity.

In the discussion of knowledge transfer, Niedderer et al. explore how to make the exhibition explicit without text, in visual ways. Niedderer et al. distinguish between 'aesthetic' exhibitions and 'contextual' exhibitions.[33] 'In contextual exhibitions the artefacts are complementary to some accompanying, informative, comparative, and explicatory material, which determines their reading and interpretation.'[34] This may offer a way of counteracting the normative viewer behaviours and readings of art works in conventional gallery contexts that we have already highlighted.[35] Niedderer et al. suggest that a research exhibition could communicate the research through predominantly non-verbal means, ranging from maps and diagrams, illustrations and photographs, to slides and films. In addition, the different taxonomies used in museums and exhibitions can be employed to help communicate the research through a thematic ordering, juxtaposition and pattern recognition. They conclude that the research exhibition must take the form of a contextual exhibition, that is, context and meaning can be created by verbal and non-verbal means.

A Research Gallery Case Study - SASA Gallery, University of South Australia

---

[31] Paul Carter, cited in Moline & Clark. 2007, 3.

[32] For example, at Curtin University the research conventions largely reference the science/social science conventions at the institutional level and within the Office of Research and Development. Since the introduction of the ERA, Non-Traditional research outputs have been added to Curtin's 'research points' system. However Curtin systems are slow to place equal value on creative research, for instance the 'publication' of creative work in an exhibition staged by the Built Environment at Curtin receives 20% of the 'research points' compared to those that a peer reviewed journal publication receives. Additionally, most of the academics that are creative practitioners do not understand creative practice as research.

[33] Niedderer et al., 2006, 6.

[34] Niedderer et al., 2006, 6.

[35] See Lyons, 2006 and Moline & Clark, 2007, on art galleries, and associated viewing behaviours.

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

The SASA Gallery is a research facility that is being developed as a centre for high-quality research and as an active site of teaching and learning. Located on the ground floor of the School of Art, Architecture and Design (AAD) in the University of South Australia, the gallery's physical and ideological connection to the AAD School supports and fosters a research and education research nexus. The principle aim of the gallery is to support a program of researched exhibitions and as such is unique in Australia and New Zealand. In the process of instituting the gallery, the director of SASA Gallery, Dr Mary Knights, aligned its mandate to the University of South Australia's research policies. Knights states 'research requires new work and the development of a research culture' and the imperatives for the gallery's exhibitions are to be 'generative' and to engender 'new curatorial ideas and practices.'[36] The SASA Gallery creates opportunities for curators, artists and designers and art and design academics to engage in research of national and international relevance and provides a venue and opportunity for academics to extend critical debate about art, architecture and design culture and expand from 'conventional' text-based research endeavours into the production of creative artefacts as quantifiable research output. Since 2007 the SASA gallery has instituted 35 new exhibitions and exhibition publications, with over 250 artists/designers/writers, 50 curators and 35 external scholars affording research outcomes, research funding, impact and esteem. It is staffed by a small team of highly qualified and experienced professionals who are research active and involved in post-graduate supervision and teaching.[37]

According to the SASA Gallery 2011 report prepared by Knights, priority is given to proposals that: demonstrate a strong curatorial premise or rationale; focus on experimental, innovative and excellent contemporary art and design practice; engage with current theories, concepts and issues relevant to contemporary art and design practice; and demonstrate excellent research. Every exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue with an ISSN number, including an essay written by an external scholar that reflects upon the curatorial premise.

---

[36] Dr. Mary Knights., interview by Jane Lawrence, February 2012.
[37] Knights, M., SASA Gallery; acquittal report, Adelaide, unpublished (2011).

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

IDEA
Interior Design/
Interior Architecture
Educators Association

Symposium 2012 *Interior: A State of Becoming*
Curtin University   September 2012

Beyond its exhibition program, the gallery continues to support research outcomes across curatorial art and design, publication and editing and the drafting of applications for research grants funding. The rigour of the proposals and resulting calibre of exhibitions attracts nationally significant curators, artists, designers, writers, performers, researchers and research funding. Additionally, impact and esteem have been evidenced through reviews in national journals, print and audio visual media.

The Gallery is governed by a Programming Committee comprising 10 academic staff from every undergraduate and post graduate program in the AAD School, including interior architecture; the Divisional Dean of Research, three external scholars, and a research post-graduate representative. The committee peer assesses researched based exhibition proposals, publishing and its external scholars programs. This is a transparent peer review process and assessment is according to published criteria, which reflect the focus on research as well as the diverse contemporary art and design practices across the school. Proposals for assessment include: a synopsis of the curatorial theme or rationale; an overview of the exhibition and its alignment to the SASA Gallery aims and objectives; summary of engagement with research and anticipated research outcomes; a brief overview of the catalogue and/or written material associated with the exhibition; a summary about the writers (including examples of published texts by writers); a description of related events such as guest lectures, residencies and artist talks; a budget including itemised expenditure, cash funds and in-kind contributions; a list of confirmed and agreed contributors including their CVs: and up to 20 images of work for a group show, or 10 images for a solo exhibition, which may include audio visual material and a list of all support material with name, title, date, medium and dimensions.

The SASA gallery is financially supported with an annual school and division contribution and leverages internal and external research funding, in-kind support and sponsorship.[38] It also attracts category 2 Research Funding from the South Australian state government and other agencies and key partners comprising tertiary institutions. The gallery's profile for rigorous research has meant that it is now in a favourable position to apply for category A funding and corporate sponsorship with an ARC grant in development.

The SASA gallery's research-based exhibitions differ from what could be regarded as 'artistic' exhibitions in Australian not-for-profit public galleries, which generally comprise a collection or display of works framed around a theme, a project, a place, an event or a society and wanting in a theoretical framework and/or demonstration of engagement with scholarly research. The curatorial premises and objectives are broad and tend to focus on community engagement and accessibility of art in public forums, opportunities for display and expanding knowledge in arts practices and education. Calls for proposals in these galleries commonly require a title and synopsis for the exhibition and linkages with the gallery's theme, description and type of exhibits, biographies of the artists, funding details and material and organisational information of the exhibition itself and its launch. While these galleries require excellence and cite quality and best practices, they are not primarily research-focused for quantifiable outcomes, but are largely-program based. In contrast, the SASA Gallery's process for quality assurance and its research focus provide an applicable model for our purposes.

Pilot Model for Interior Architecture: IDEA 2012 Exhibition as Research

The bi-annual 2012 IDEA Symposium *Interior: A state of becoming* will include, for the first time, a research-based exhibition of creative work. This section describes the process of evaluation that the IDEA 2012 exhibition curatorial committee undertook to make clear how national research

---

[38]Knights, M., 2011.

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

IDEA
Interior Design/
Interior Architecture
Educators Association

Symposium 2012 *Interior: A State of Becoming*

Curtin University   September 2012

guidelines are interpreted in reality. The 'curatorial committee' comprises four interior architecture/spatial design academics from four different institutions in Australia and New Zealand, including the host organisation. Each of the curators have attained research output in either curatorial practice and/or research-based creative outputs across a broad range of creative practices.

As the curatorial committee, we asked ourselves: What are the key requirements for quality assurance and dissemination, and what is the process to establish that? We also examined the notion of an exhibition of creative works as a diverse range of individual ideas, as opposed to a thematic collection of work.

A call for creative works for exhibition returned 24 varied responses which were submitted to a blind peer reviewing process. This was undertaken by the curatorial committee together with invited referees with demonstrated scholarly output in specialised areas of creative work, including speculative and constructed works in two and three dimensions, performative works and virtual works. At that stage, and most critically, the review of the proposed creative works and complementing contextual statement had to lucidly demonstrate an engagement with research. In addition, the curatorial committee also reviewed the proposals to ensure that the work would be experienced as a cohesive collection and that it would adhere to a curatorial premise as well as evidence research excellence.

The research framework guidelines for exhibition venue/gallery/public space/ephemera/performance, accredited or otherwise, remain broad and open to interpretation. Where the research output pertains to the curation of an exhibition, ERA emphasises the standing or recognition of the gallery, museum or event.[39] The curatorial committee's position, however, is to

---

[39] 2012 ERA Guidelines 5.4.9.6 'The curation and/or production of a collection of creative works exhibited together for the first time, in that particular arrangement, in a recognised gallery, museum, or event. This should be accompanied by a well researched publication that includes the date and location of the exhibition.'

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

privilege the quality assurance process over the venue. But it is nonetheless important that the venue for exhibition reflects or embodies the curatorial position and indeed may be the curatorial premise itself. One example of a peer-esteemed exhibition held beyond a built enclosure and considering the role played by the urban environment itself in influencing the production of artworks, was the *There Forever Ephemeral Public Art Project* curated by Dr Linda Marie Walker and Dr Steven Loo. The 2007 project for the inaugural Port Adelaide Festival was an invited curatorial exhibition that 'expanded traditional understandings of curatorial methodologies' and examined the concept of the 'ephemeral' in relation to artworks in public space.[40] The significance of this project in terms of research is that it 'proposed a new model for curatorial practice and employed a process based methodology to encourage artists to produce works in response to the specific social and physical characteristics of a given site.'[41]

Conclusion

Earlier, Niedderer et al. questioned 'what an exhibition's essential contribution to knowledge might be, and how that contribution is to be archived and disseminated.'[42] During the process of piloting the exhibition, the curatorial committee questioned how this could be achieved. It determined that the typical exhibition catalogue was an important and essential form of record (and necessary for the purposes of validation/evidence in the Australian context ERA). However, the actuality was problematic, since practice as research is often a work in progress, particularly in the case of performative works. Because the material for the catalogue (text/images) must be made available for printing months before some of the works, and therefore research, were concluded, the publication of research would be incomplete.

---

[40] Linda Marie Walker, ' HCA Cluster 2 Research Statement, unpublished (2012).
[41] L. M. Walker, 2012.
[42] K. Niedderer, et al. (2006), 1.

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture

The thematic of becoming is both inherent and interpreted in this exhibition through the process, technologies, sites and output. The exhibition site can be a place where a more involved and integrated negotiation occurs between the creative work, the research to be communicated and the public, beyond what a conventional art gallery setting can offer, with its associated normative behaviours and readings of the work. The exhibition design is conceptualised as a living archive and incorporates a 'QR' reader interface that allows a mobile phone interaction with a live updated website. It digitally documents the exhibition and its events in space and over time including temporal works, floor talks and audience feedback. This produces an experience that invites viewer/creative work interaction and reflection as an ongoing process during and beyond the exhibition showing.

As the publication of this paper precedes the actual exhibition, we expect that further research on the model will include an evaluation of the research in action at the event through various means of research gathering methods.

This pilot model merges aspects of recognised curatorial approaches and peer review approaches used in academic journal and conferences. It will test our interpretation of the existing constraints imposed by the various research frameworks. It will also test the efficacy of our proposed exhibition design as event as well as the initiated quality assurance and refereeing processes. The pilot model also recognises and validates the multitudinous interior design/interior architectural creative works evidenced in the variety of proposals submitted in the initial call. In mirroring both the open-ended enquiry of research endeavours and the exhibition proposition of 'interior: a state of becoming', this pilot model is evolutionary and emergent and, as a work–in–progress, embryonic.

An exhibition model to enable recognition and evaluation of creative works as research in interior design/interior architecture